

In and Around Naples
**A Series of Presentations
 for the Collier County Library
 by Paul Pacter**

**Big Cypress Bend at
 Fakahatchee Strand
 State Preserve**

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Big Cypress Bend

Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve

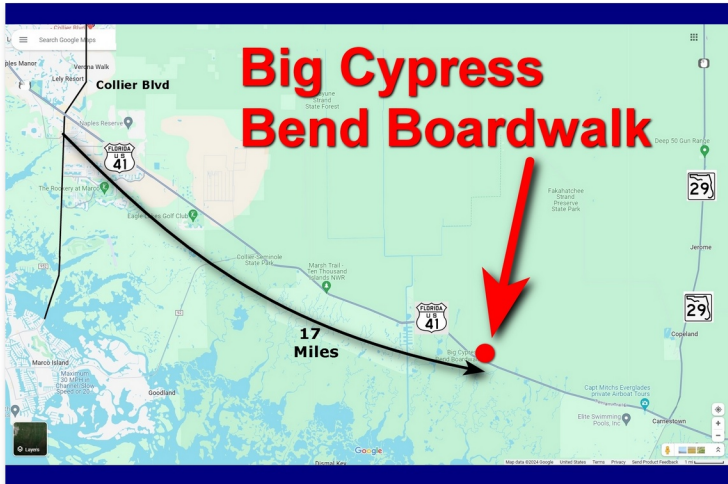
Website: www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park

Where: US-41, Copeland FL 34137.

Get There: US-41 East 17 miles from Collier Blvd intersection.

When: 8am to sunset.

Admission: \$3.



What: Fakahatchee Strand Preserve is the largest State Park in Florida (out of 175 parks).

Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk is one feature of the Preserve.

At the moment, there are TWO Big Cypress Bend Boardwalks: One closed and one partially open.

Eventually the two will be connected to form a loop.

Why are there currently two Big Cypress Bend Boardwalks?

- There is an old 3,200' boardwalk plus 1,000' gravel path thru a swamp to an alligator pond. Lots of wildlife.
- The State had planned a major loop extension of the old boardwalk – and had started work on a small part of the extension plus new parking and visitors' center – when Hurricane Ian hit in Sept 2022.

Ian made the old boardwalk unusable.

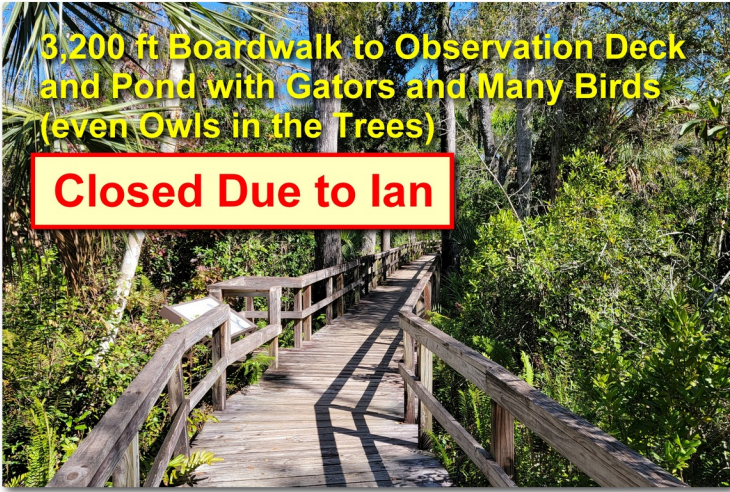
- The State had funding for only part of the new extension.
- Finally, in Feb 2024, about ½ mile of the new extension opened, along with a parking area and visitors' center.
- The State still needs funding for the rest of the new extension and also for repairs to the old boardwalk.

The map on the next slide illustrates all of this.



The next 7 slides show the OLD boardwalk and alligator pond.

- These are not currently accessible due to Hurricane Ian damage.
- After the old boardwalk is repaired, it will become part of the expanded hiking loop (including boardwalk, canopy walk, and trails) shown in the previous map.



3,200 ft Boardwalk to Observation Deck and Pond with Gators and Many Birds (even Owls in the Trees)

Closed Due to Ian



**Lake at the End of the Boardwalk
One of the most beautiful spots in or near Naples!**

Not currently accessible due to Ian.



**Big Cypress Bend Observation Deck
Benches to Sit and Watch**

Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.



**Big Cypress Bend
Gators Cuddling**

Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.



**Barred Owl Looking
Down on the Pond**

Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.



Sometimes Two Barred Owls

Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.



Large Alligator Sunning in the Pond

Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.



Area not accessible due to Hurricane Ian.

The rest of the slides illustrate the parts of Big Cypress Bend that are now open.



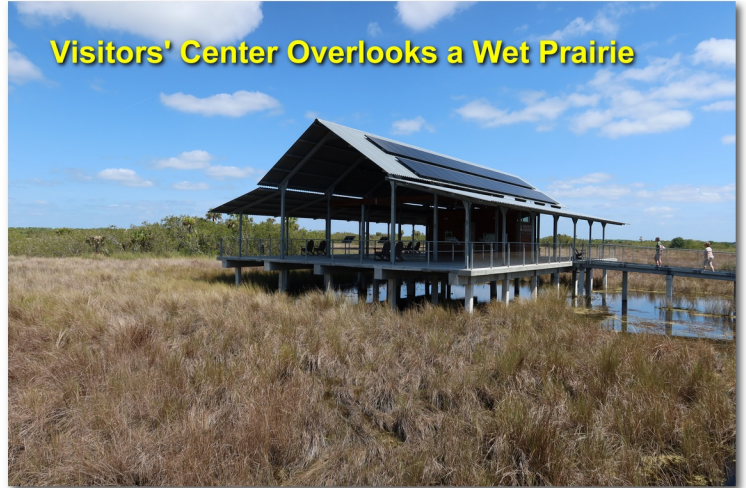
Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk
New bridge from parking to visitors' center.



Visitors' Center and Start of Boardwalk



Visitors' Center Overlooks a Wet Prairie



Start of Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk



Prairie - Big Cypress Bend



Egret in a tree on the prairie



Boardwalk becomes a crushed shell path when you reach Green Heron Lake



You walk along a crushed shell path at Green Heron Lake



Green Heron Lake
Big Cypress Bend



Old Boardwalk – To Be Repaired. Closed.
New Boardwalk and Trail – Already Opened.
New Boardwalk, Canopy Walk, and Trail – To Be built.



Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk ● is only a very small part of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park (entire park 5 mi x 20 mi).

- Janes Scenic Drive is a good gravel road.
- All the dotted red lines are hiking and wading trails.

